



## Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Mike Beebe

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### West Nile Virus Continues to Increase in Arkansas

(Little Rock)--The Arkansas Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are urging people to take steps to prevent West Nile virus infections. Outbreaks of West Nile virus disease occur each summer in the United States, but this year, some areas of the country are experiencing earlier and greater activity. Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Mississippi all are having an exponential increase with deaths reported. As of August 28, 2012, 48 states have reported West Nile virus infections in people, birds, or mosquitoes. A total of 1,590 cases of West Nile virus disease in people, including 65 deaths\*, have been reported to CDC. Of these, 889 (56%) were classified as neuroinvasive disease (such as meningitis or encephalitis) and 701 (44%) were classified as non-neuroinvasive disease.

The 1,590 cases reported thus far in 2012 is the highest number of West Nile virus disease cases reported to CDC through the last week in August since West Nile virus was first detected in the United States in 1999. Over 70 percent of the cases have been reported from six states (Texas, South Dakota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Michigan) and over 45 percent of all cases have been reported from Texas.

Arkansas has reported 31 cases so far in 2012, including three deaths. This compares to only one case in 2011.

West Nile virus is transmitted to people by infected mosquitoes. In the United States, most people are infected from June through September, and the number of these infections usually peaks in mid-August. Seasonal outbreaks often occur in local areas that can vary from year to year. Many factors impact when and where outbreaks occur, such as weather, numbers of mosquitoes that spread the virus, and human behavior.

The best way to prevent West Nile virus disease is to avoid mosquito bites. Do this by practicing the "Three D's."

- **Drain** standing water from your yard. Empty standing water in flowerpots, buckets and kiddie pools.
- Don't go out at **dusk** and **dawn** when mosquitoes feed without protective clothing (long sleeves and pants).

- Do use insect repellents with the active ingredient **DEET** when you go outdoors.

Approximately 1 in 5 people who are infected with West Nile virus will develop symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Less than 1 percent will develop a serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues). About 10 percent of people who develop neurologic infection due to West Nile virus will die. People over 50 years of age and those with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, and organ transplants, are at greater risk for serious illness.

There are no medications to treat, or vaccines to prevent, West Nile virus infection. People with milder illnesses typically recover on their own, although symptoms may last for several weeks. In more severe cases, patients often need to be hospitalized to receive supportive treatment, such as intravenous fluids, pain medication, and nursing care. Anyone who has symptoms that cause concern should contact a health care provider.

More information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> and <http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/epidemiology/Environmental/Pages/WestNileVirusSurveillance.aspx>

